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C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 000443

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SA/FO AMBASSADOR QUINN, S/CT, SA/A, G KATE
FRIEDRICH, G/IWI CHARLOTTE PONTICELLI AND DIANNE GRAHAM
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN, KAMEND
CENTCOM FOR POLAD, CG CFC-A, CG CJTF-76
TREASURY FOR LMCDONALD, WBALDRIDGE, APARAMESWARAN, ABAUKOL
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [KWMN](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: CABINET DOWNSIZING: WILL THE AFHAN MINISTRY OF
WOMEN'S AFFAIRS SURVIVE?

Classified By: A/DCM ANGUS SIMMONS FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY. During a January 25 meeting with A/DCM and POLOFFs, Minister of Women's Affairs Massouda Jalal expressed concern that the Ministry of Women's Affairs might not survive a possible upcoming cabinet reorganization. Karzai has indeed said that he would like to streamline his Cabinet to 19 ministries, although the details of this are yet unclear (SEPTTEL). His new Cabinet will have to be confirmed by the new Parliament. Post does not believe that MOWA is in serious danger, or that we should be telling the GOA how to structure the Afghan government. However, we will let the GOA know that, whatever decision they might make on Cabinet re-structuring, they will need to demonstrate to the international community and the Afghan population that they are committed to improving the lot of Afghanistan's women. END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) During her meeting, Jalal asked for the assistance of a technical expert from the US to assist MOWA in developing a project proposal for additional support for women's councils across Afghanistan. She would also like support for project funding for these councils (after the expert develops a proposal and a donors conference is held). In response, A/DCM stated that support to the women of Afghanistan remains a high priority for the US. POLOFF suggested Jalal might also seek private funding for the expert she seeks (for example, from Ambassador Swanee Hunt, who has expressed interest in this type of assistance).

13. (C) Jalal mentioned that she has heard rumors that MOWA will be eliminated, and asked for support to counter this action. Other agencies in Kabul (such as UNIFEM and the Dutch Embassy) have also begun to seek support for a demarche or other action in support of the existence of an independent MOWA. Post has separately heard rumors that a proposal to combine MOWA with the Ministry of Youth Affairs, Ministry of Martyrs and the Disabled, and Ministry of Social and Labor Affairs into a single Ministry of Social Affairs is under discussion as part of a general reorganization of the Cabinet and reduction of the number of Ministries. Other international and Afghan sources, including one Minister and one AIHRC Commissioner, say the merger is likely to only involve three Ministries, with MOWA remaining separate because of its symbolic importance to improving women's lives in Afghanistan.

Comment

14. (C) Jalal's requests for support for MOWA may be an attempt to demonstrate her importance as a Minister and her ability to bring in funds to Afghanistan when she is facing challenges on two fronts: her position as Minister (which must now be confirmed by Parliament) and the independence of her Ministry. Jalal has faced substantial criticism during her tenure, in part for spending extensive time overseas, and has expressed concern about the likelihood of her re-nomination by Karzai or confirmation by Parliament to EMBOFFs. Post is not supporting the re-appointment or confirmation of any individual Minister.

15. (C) Post does not believe it is our role to determine the structure of the Afghan government, but will work to ensure that women's issues do not get short shrift in whatever future structure the Afghan bureaucracy will take. We will remind the GOA of the symbolic importance that the Ministry has to Afghans and the international community. If a merger of Ministries were to take place, we would stress the importance of maintaining Women's Affairs in the name of the Ministry and of sustaining programs that empower women. END COMMENT.
NORLAND